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ABSTRACT

This document presents information on how the Western states are responding to some of the major policy issues facing U.S. higher education today and on the strategies they have used to implement change. The study, prepared by the Western Policy Exchange Project, defines today's higher education environment as characterized by dynamic global, national, and state economies; increasing demand accompanied by tightening resources; changing demographies; new services and delivery modes; competing market-based models; and changing customer expectations. Other sections in the document include: (1) identify key elements of the systemic change process and list several hypotheses about how state higher education systems change; (2) raise issues of access and changing student demographics; (3) explore the impact of information technology on higher education; (4) note the increasing costs of supporting state colleges and universities and the competing demands on state budgets; (5) review the need for linkages to K-12 education, for outreach programs that reach a wide range of students, and for partnerships with business and industry; and (6) define some of the emerging issues still ahead, including increasing the quality of teacher education; the demographics of a changing student population; problems of affordability and financial aid; the shift toward competency-based education; and the changing role of faculty. (CH)

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Policy in Transition

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HE 032 374

Working Toward Systemic Change in Higher Education in the West

WICHE Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
WICHE

Policy in Transition

Working Toward Systemic Change in Higher Education in the West

Supported by a grant from

the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

for the

Western Policy Exchange Project

June 1999

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a public, interstate agency established to promote and to facilitate resource sharing, collaboration, and cooperative planning among the Western states and their colleges and universities. Member and affiliated states are:

Alaska	Idaho	Oregon
Arizona	Montana	South Dakota
California	Nevada	Utah
Colorado	New Mexico	Washington
Hawaii	North Dakota	Wyoming

WICHE's broad objectives are to:

- Strengthen educational opportunities for students through expanded access to programs,
- Assist policymakers in dealing with higher education and human resource issues through research and analysis,
- Foster cooperative planning, especially that which targets the sharing of resources.

This publication was prepared by the Office of Policy and Information, which is involved in the research, analysis, and reporting of information on public policy issues of concern in the WICHE states, and the Communications Unit. A grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided partial funding for our Western Policy Exchange project. For further information, please contact Cheryl D. Blanco, Director, Policy and Information, P.O. Box 9752, Boulder, CO 80301-9752; Telephone: (303) 541-0224; FAX: (303) 541-0291.

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LIKE most states around the nation, those in the West are in a transitional period with higher education. The Western region is experiencing a growing market in an environment of diminishing public resources. This environment requires that higher education reexamine itself and make major changes.

WICHE, with a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for the Western Policy Exchange (WPE) project, has facilitated a coordinated approach with policymakers and education leaders to help shape new educational designs and create innovative, effective policy responses. The WPE has provided opportunities for a public policy decision-making process to examine and shape the public interest in higher education.

We initiated a process to assist constituents in forming policy that both supports and guides the states and higher education through this transition. The Kellogg Foundation's investment stimulated many partnerships with other higher education organizations and private foundations. *Policy in Transition* is one of many ways we can share the experiences and lessons learned during the Western Policy Exchange project with our colleagues across the nation. This publication briefly summarizes some of the major policy issues confronted by higher education, how the Western states have faced these issues in the past three years, and what strategies they have used to implement change.

Providing an effective process to examine and shape the public interest in higher education requires a special effort. The Western Policy Exchange project's emphasis on systemic change has galvanized policymakers and educators to join together in using public policy as a tool to reshape higher education in many ways. Their job is not done because a couple of years simply do not provide enough time to produce systemic change. But the majority of WICHE states are committed to the long-term goal. We truly appreciate the support of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in these efforts.

Richard W. Jonsen
Executive Director, WICHE

Frank H. Besnette
WICHE Chair and Executive Director, Arizona Board of Regents

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Policy in Transition

A Western Policy Exchange
Sponsored by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

The challenges of growth and change in the West are all around us. Education, the environment, the economy, social and political structures – all are struggling to understand and cope with the phenomenal transformations occurring on local, regional, national, and global levels. As an interstate compact serving the Western region for nearly 50 years, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) works with states to improve higher education. In these challenging times, our environment is characterized by:

- **Dynamic global, national, and state economies.** Turbulent economic change compels higher education to increase its relevance and responsiveness to society's needs. This requires a wider range of postsecondary opportunities and quicker responses to emerging education and training needs.

"Policy for the coming decade cannot be fashioned successfully by fine-tuning policies that are currently in place; policymakers need an entirely new conceptual approach to policy frameworks and subsequently to the individual components of policy."

Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research

- **Increasing demand accompanied by tightening of resources.** Competing pressures for fiscal resources and the projected increase in demand for higher education in many states raise questions about the capacity of traditional providers to respond to state priorities for access.
- **Changing demographics.** Higher education must work harder to better serve more students and an increasingly diverse population. In the WICHE region, public school enrollments will grow by 1.3 million students, or 13 percent, between 1993 and 2000, with enrollment increases of 41 percent for Latinos, 20 percent among Asian/Pacific Islanders, 19 percent for American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and 17 percent for African Americans. White non-Hispanic enrollments, however, will remain stable or decline slightly. The region is projected to experience a 35 percent increase between 1994-95 and 2007-08 in the number of high school graduates.

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- **Emerging services and delivery modes.** Advances in technology offer exciting potential for new higher education structures and delivery systems that respond to state priorities more effectively and efficiently. Innovation must be incorporated into the learning process to make the best use of new technologies.

- **Competing market-based models and customer expectations.** As consumers, students expect institutions to respond to them in much the same manner as their banks, supermarkets, and retail stores. A college degree now provides a greater marginal increase in economic security than ever before, and students demand high quality, good service, and economic value for their tuition dollars.

What does this changing landscape mean for the West's colleges and universities? And how can they best prepare themselves to meet the challenges coming all too quickly down the road?

An essential tool for shaping higher education in the American West today is *policy* – the ideas we have about higher education, the solutions we generate, and how we implement them. The West is a community that was built on – and continues to thrive on – differences. Yet even in the variegated West, there's a need for some cohesion of ideas as we face the problems and shape the answers of the future.

In 1996, WICHE undertook a three-year project, the Western Policy Exchange, partially funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, to ask and address some of the most fundamental questions facing higher education today. As one would expect in a place as diverse as the West, definitive answers were few. But in forums, workshops, and roundtable sessions throughout the region, issues were defined, hurdles and barriers were named, early solutions were suggested, and policy options were mapped. In the West, the dialogue of change has begun. *Policy in Transition* describes some of the challenges, part of the process, and many of the lessons learned during the Western Policy Exchange project.

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Systemic Change

In 1995, WICHE began a conversation with the Western states about systemic change because of growing concern at the state level that higher education was not performing well enough. The degree of change required to close the gap between the current level of performance and the expected or desired performance of higher education would require changes amounting to a "transformation." Assisting states in undertaking a systemic change process focused on the state policy environment became the goal of the Western Policy Exchange project.

The players in this environment included governors and legislators, governing and coordinating boards, and leaders from education and business, faculty, and students. A "systemic" approach to change requires not only the right players but also an understanding of limitations that existing structures have and whether these limitations are part of the problem. A carefully and thoughtfully *redesigned* system reflects the state's priorities and desired outcomes and creates incentives and accountability structures that facilitate good planning and management to achieve those outcomes.

"There is documentable evidence that policymaking has been improved, resulting in both institutional transformation and systemic change in higher education. The coordinated approach of multistate forums held throughout the region and the state roundtables proved to be effective for developing specific strategies to advance systemic reforms in higher education."

Louis W. Bender, External Evaluator
Western Policy Exchange Project
and Professor Emeritus
Florida State University

Richard C. Richardson, policy advisor to the Western Policy Exchange, produced a concept paper for the project titled *Systemic Change in Higher Education*, in which he identifies some key elements of the systemic change process:

- Assessing the performance of state higher education systems to determine if these are consistent with the goals stakeholders believe necessary to meet future needs.
- Appraising whether a state's policy environment supports desired outcomes.
- Evaluating whether system design provides the necessary tools for desired outcomes.
- Developing an action agenda for changing policies or redesigning systems in mutually compatible ways to achieve desired outcomes.

WICHE and the WPE project encouraged participants to discuss their state's priorities for higher education and whether new structural relationships were needed between state government and higher education, and within higher education, to better align public priorities and higher education performance.

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"Purposeful change begins with understanding the ways in which current performance falls short of desired performance. Purposeful change proceeds with the understanding that alterations to either the policy environment or to system design must be accompanied by appropriate modifications to the other. Finally, insights about state-level systemic change efforts must be linked to the actions of providers as they adapt to changes in policies or system designs. Not all states confront issues that require systemic change. But all states can benefit from approaching all forms of change in more systemic ways."

Richard C. Richardson Jr.
Policy Advisor
Western Policy Exchange Project
and Professor
Arizona State University

Since the urgency of change demanded that policy discussions involve a broad range of constituencies, the project offered diverse activities to raise the visibility of higher education on the political agenda, incorporate multiple viewpoints, address fundamental goals and policies, and examine new fiscal, organizational, and operational strategies (see p. 16 for more detail).

The ultimate goal of systemic change can best be accomplished through a public policy decision-making process. In the following pages, we look at a few critical issues facing higher education and how states grappled with those issues.

Hypotheses about how state higher education systems change:

1. **Changing the performance of state higher education systems in more than incremental ways requires coordinated leadership from policymakers focused around a priority agenda and sustained over time. Gubernatorial support is particularly crucial.**
2. **Reliable and credible information about constituency needs and higher education performance is a prerequisite to establishing priorities for systemic change that extends beyond the problem fixing associated with disjointed, incremental initiatives.**
3. **Developing consensus among key stakeholders about the nature of performance gaps and the most promising strategies for addressing them is a critical step in the systemic change process.**
4. **Incentives and disincentives in the state policy environment must be aligned with and support state priorities for consistent and purposeful change.**
5. **To become involved in the purposeful and consistent improvement in the performance of their higher education systems, states need a design in which some statewide agency is charged with the ongoing responsibility for collecting information about needs and performance and for using that information to build consensus among stakeholders about needed change.**

Source: Richardson, R.C., Jr. "Systemic Change in Higher Education." Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Feb. 1989.

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Issues Debated ...
... and Lessons Learned

Access

BETWEEN now and 2008, the states of the WICHE region can expect to see some 127,000 new high school graduates – a rise of nearly 20 percent over the present level. But the growth will be uneven among the states, and these numbers tell only part of the story.

Already, on most campuses, the student body looks very different than it did even five years ago, with a larger number of older, part-time, and racial/ethnic minority students attending. By 2011, over half of all high school graduates in the West will be racial/ethnic minorities, and in some states the percentage will be far higher. But these future high school graduates will not be the only students on campus. Returning students with all levels of education, regearing to change careers or fine-tuning their skills, will be very much in evidence, too.

"DEMOGRAPHY is not destiny. Policy, not demographics, will determine whether demand for higher education and access to it will grow."

Robin Zuñiga
Former Research Associate
WICHE

To assist states with their concerns on access, WICHE sponsored several activities, including a regional policy forum – ***Endangered Access: Financing and Delivering Higher Education in Growth States with Limited Resources*** – held in Huntington Beach, California (October 1997). Elsewhere, at a policy forum in Seattle on ***Fostering Postsecondary Success*** and in roundtable discussions held in the states of New Mexico and Washington, access issues were also on the table. The central issue around which all these discussions revolved: How states can provide a rich and relevant education to a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse student body – and how they can do it all on declining public support.

Access is not a freestanding issue. Instead, because higher education is a resource of finite capacity and fluctuating costs, access interacts with a host of other matters.

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Lessons Learned

Stretching the higher education resource as far as possible on today's constrained budgets is a growing challenge – but participants in our forums and roundtables undertook the task in earnest. The wish to serve the next generation of students was central – but how those students will be best served is a matter still very much in question. There was little disagreement on some key issues:

- Better higher education/K-12 linkages should translate into a lessening of the need for remedial courses at colleges – and a speeding of time-to-degree.
- The goal of better preparing all students for college should also strengthen minority participation rates.
- Improved articulation – including consensus-building between two- and four-year institutions on such critical matters as course content – will cut the need for students to repeat courses after they've transferred to a new institution. Once again, student turnaround time on degrees should improve.
- Collaboration across all levels of education to achieve more effective and efficient use of resources is essential. Joint use facilities, dual or concurrent enrollment for high school students in college courses, and faculty-sharing activities are a few of the ideas promoted in the region.
- Expanding regional student exchange initiatives would increase access for students from states facing high-growth challenges. Encouraging students to attend college in other states and supporting them creates a win-win situation for students, institutions, and states.

"The most frightening challenge is the schism between the haves and the have-nots."

John Slaughter, President
Occidental College
and Cochair
California Citizens Commission on
Higher Education

- Information technology (IT) holds both promise and pitfalls for access. IT used in distance learning has tremendous potential for serving people in rural and difficult-to-reach areas. IT may also contribute, however, to the creation of "haves and have-nots" among students, depending on access to the technology and their skills in using hardware and software. Just as important, no one seems to have a good handle on the cost/benefit side of using IT in higher education.
- Outcomes and competencies are major movements in some states. Assessing subject mastery and competency requires rethinking how students enter higher education, how they progress, and how they leave.

Information Technology

Second only perhaps to concern with access in the West is the dramatic impact of information technology (IT). A recent survey of a sample of public and private colleges and universities nationally documents the incredible rise in the use of IT for academic purposes.[1] Nearly one-half of college classes used email in 1998, compared to 8 percent in 1994; one-third of all college courses used Internet resources. Virtual high schools are beginning to dot the landscape, offering precollege courses on the Internet. More and more states are setting up virtual campuses to join the Western Governors University and other electronic providers in cyberspace.

IT is of critical importance in the West – though for different reasons in different states. Most states are seeing growing numbers of postsecondary clients for whom distance education could be a real boon, including returning students who are coming back for additional training in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, often while working and raising a family.

"The capacity of technology is increasing dramatically. We talk about the ability of technology to reach off-campus students, but equally important is the way that technology is affecting on-campus instruction. You can't put those two in separate buckets. The real question is technology – what is its capacity and what it means for education in all its forms."

Dennis Jones, President
National Center for Higher
Education Management Systems

IT holds promise for some of higher education's problems and potentialities, but in the process of understanding how best to utilize this resource, there are significant issues – from the fiscal to the philosophical – yet to be worked out. As is always the case with any major shift in thinking and practice, the devil is in the details. And the details are many and complex, requiring a high degree of consensus on the part of educators, administrators and legislators. No small task.

The Kellogg Foundation's grant to WICHE helped the states tackle one of IT's more complicated issues: finance. In December 1998, Portland was the scene of a WICHE forum, *Policy in Transition: Information Technology's Impact on the Financing of Higher Education.* At state roundtables in Washington, Montana, and New Mexico, participants also touched on information technology issues. The perspectives they brought to bear – as legislators, educators and businesspeople – did not yield a clearly delineated picture but rather a view of IT in the round. The forums and roundtables were a step in possibly reconciling the different perspectives of participants and moving them toward a shared vision for IT in their states.

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Lessons Learned

The forums and roundtables helped define some of the questions that must be answered for information technology to be fully integrated into higher education.

"We can't think of technology as a train that runs on its own track – the issues it raises are very fundamental.... Maybe the policy mechanisms for public finance and governance that have worked so well in the last half century need to be challenged."

Pat Callan, President, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

- The Consumer Question: How can we ensure that all students have access to IT and the opportunity to use it in higher education?
- The Cost Question: How will the long-term costs of information technology be structured and paid for?
- The Collaboration Question: What kinds of incentives are needed to maximize collaboration between institutions and among states?
- The Preparation Question: How can states best assist faculty in improving their skills in using IT in teaching and learning?

Information technology is embedded in numerous other issues, from access and articulation to finance and collaboration. Funding technology over the long-term is just one of the hurdles. Forging linkages between different states and institutions so they can better disseminate educational offerings; supporting faculty so that they can design and implement these offerings; assessing the value of IT in teaching, learning, and administration; providing adequate service to students – these are some of the others. But at the center of every discussion are the region's students. The need to serve them is critical, and how to serve them well is the baseline question.

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[1] Green, K.C. *Campus Computing 1998*. Encino, CA: The Campus Computing Project, 1999.

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Finance

As the demands on higher education continue to increase – due in part to growing numbers of new and returning students – the cost of supporting state colleges and universities has become a major issue for states across the West. The how-to-pay-for-it question has been further complicated by competing demands on state budgets from sectors such as corrections and transportation, demands that have resulted in a drop – gradual or precipitous – in higher education's share of the overall budget in many states. Meanwhile, another sector – business – has its own ideas about what public colleges and universities should be doing to prepare students to meet the demands of the world of work today.

In an attempt to squeeze as much as possible out of every dollar, policymakers and educators are involved in a conversation that's very much geared to the bottom line. The controversial view of education as a market-driven "business" has meant that this conversation revolves around themes that were once found within the purview of the corporate world. Productivity, accountability, objectives, outcomes, and incentives are just some of the issues on the agenda.

In August 1996, WICHE sponsored a regional policy workshop that addressed the complicated tangle of finance issues directly. *Transforming Higher Education: New Structures for Finance, Governance, Delivery, and Productivity* brought together policy and education leaders to analyze higher ed's financing policies, structures, and capacities. At several state roundtables, too, higher ed funding issues were front and center; they were also a major element of WICHE's policy forum on information technology in Portland. Many participants agreed: To meet the imperatives of the 21st century, states will need to rethink how they fund higher education.

"What is it we want to build on and keep but alter, modify, or change gradually? And what is new and innovative that we absolutely must be involved in?"

Clifford Trow,
Oregon State Senator
and Faculty Member,
Oregon State University

How will the reshaping evolve? At forums and roundtables, participants called for higher ed to become more "client-centered" – to focus more specifically on what students need today and on how to best meet those needs. But students were not the only stakeholders: Higher ed must also consider local and state goals and regional needs, as well as the now and future requirements of business.

Discussions also touched on productivity issues, including the setting of performance objectives and the testing of outcomes, issues that a number of states have included in formal change efforts. In South Dakota, the Board of Regents has devised an alternative funding framework to link state funding for institutions to a series of specific state policy

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objectives, such as student retention, institutional collaboration, academic quality, and the pursuit of outside funding. At the same time, a set of incentives were instituted that would make faculty salaries competitive with those of neighboring states. Assistance from WICHE's Kellogg Foundation grant for several South Dakota roundtables helped the Board of Regents build consensus on many of these issues.

Lessons Learned

To make the most of every state dollar they receive, higher education institutions will need to move to a model that's less institution-focused and more broadly collaborative. States outside the West are moving toward performance-driven financing approaches that incorporate institutional response to state needs. Although many acknowledge the need to explore new approaches to financing higher education, policymakers and educators alike tend to view suggestions with some interest but much more skepticism.

Financing concerns force states to examine all facets of higher education.

- Delivery of courses and programs is a major issue. How do we finance a delivery system that must increasingly take higher education to the student rather than bringing the student to the campus?

"[Colleges and universities must] move themselves to a much more effective mode, not because they have been ineffective but because the world is changing. That is the exciting thing about the coming decade, the decade of higher education's transformation."

Frank Newman, President
Education Commission of the States

- Information technology is creating tremendous uncertainty for financing. How do states create an ongoing funding mechanism to support IT and institutional collaboration and move away from budget set-asides for these expenses?
- Affordability of higher education has captured the national spotlight as higher education continues to receive a smaller proportion of state revenues and more of the cost of education is transferred to the student. What should the public investment in higher education be? Can low tuition/low financial aid policies found in most Western states continue in a new financing environment?
- Governance structures are being questioned as never before. Are the current structures of systems and campuses the most effective and efficient way to deal with market-driven higher education and the rapid growth of new providers?

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Linkages

Partnerships are not foreign to higher ed, but the shape of these relationships will be different, for higher education is being asked not for theory but for workable aid and practical assistance – ideas that can be put immediately into practice.

The need for such linkages has been a frequent topic at WICHE forums and roundtables, for their creation is central to finding solutions for other thorny problems. The problem of access, for instance, will not be solved by simply increasing the number of higher ed seats. Students must also be well-prepared if they are to complete their degrees in a timely manner – and for that to happen they must be well taught from kindergarten onwards. That means that schools of education must be improved, and their goals made central to the missions of colleges and universities; it means that states must support outreach programs for a wide range of students, from the at-risk to the college-prep. But because the linkage issue also touches on nontraditional students – from homemakers reentering the work force to executives in need of retraining – the outreach needs to extend to business too.

Two WICHE forums – one in Seattle in May 1997 on *Fostering Postsecondary Student Success* and a second in Huntington Beach on *Endangered Access* – examined this need for linkages between higher ed and other constituencies. For business, the ideas included short-term training that would quickly provide employable skills, allowing people to find work as soon as possible, and longer-term programs that would combine general ed requirements with the kind of technical training needed by local or regional businesses. Partnering with K-12 might mean establishing programs such as Washington State's Running Start Program that helps advanced students get a jump on college or Nevada's activities boosting the quality of schools of education so that all graduates are prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education.

"The State of Idaho has embarked upon a process to create a dialogue between educational institutions and the higher education system on the one hand and consumers, supporters, and other interested off-campus observers on the other."

Curtis Eaton, Member,
Idaho Board of Education

State roundtables also addressed the idea of linkages. Idaho stood out as the state that pursued the topic of business-higher ed partnerships most vigorously. The Idaho roundtables established a dialogue between higher ed and the corporate sector that looked at such issues as how colleges and universities can help to improve the pool of skilled workers and how institutions can reduce competition and increase cooperation in order to make state

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"It is critically important to partner more effectively with high schools, to encourage students to participate in dual-credit programs, to address the remedial problem in the high school where we can, and to encourage students to take courses which we can accredit. Our model is to put high technology centers on high school campuses. Joint facility use sends a very serious message to our population and to our legislators that we are doing business differently. We are not trying to compete with K-12 – we are trying to collaborate and use facilities more effectively."

Richard Jarvis, Chancellor
University and Community College
System of Nevada

higher ed dollars go farther. Elsewhere, in Arizona, K-16 linkages were the primary topic, with participants looking at teacher preparation and support and other ways that higher ed can help to strengthen K-12.

Lessons Learned

Higher education is undergoing a sea change, augmenting its traditional teaching-and-research role with a more activist role in the community. Serving state goals – including support of K-12 education and economic or business-related prerogatives – will require not only the formation of linkages with these sectors but also changes within higher education itself, from improved articulation processes to strengthening schools of education to offering options to a wider range of students, from traditional freshmen to lifelong learners. And the increased attention to state goals will require higher education to compete with new providers from the nonprofit, proprietary, and corporate sectors.

But expanding or developing these bridges entails new fiscal and human resources or redirecting existing resources. In tight fiscal times, these are not simple or readily acceptable options. And the difficult choices often mean going back to institutional missions and statewide goals for higher education. Resources are severely limiting what can be done and by whom, and individual higher education institutions and systems have a difficult time letting go of their drive to be all things to all people.

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Emerging Issues

The activities and joint projects with Western states have provided a strong foundation to examine critical issues of access, information technology, finance, and linkages. Clearly, these areas were on the minds of policymakers and educators alike when the Western Policy Exchange project started in 1996. Over the last three years, participants in the forums and roundtables of WICHE's Western Policy Exchange have worked to help define the policymaking framework needed to bring about real and systemic change in Western states. The meetings themselves have helped to level the playing field somewhat by bringing together players whose interests are divergent, sometimes even antagonistic.

"States are going to be, in one way or other, heavily in the business of assuring that their citizens have access and opportunity and quality. The ways that they try to assure that may have to change quite fundamentally. I think the winners will not necessarily be those who can throw the most money each year at the problem, but those who can relate the good investments they make most clearly to the public purposes they're trying to achieve."

Pat Callan, President
National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

The issues discussed at our forums and roundtables will only grow in importance in the coming years. Along the way, other topics have surfaced as additional critical issues: teacher education, the changing student profile, affordability and financial aid, competency-based education, and the changing role of faculty. What's upon us or just ahead?

- **Teacher Education.** National legislation and growing concern within states about the quality and quantity of K-12 teachers have brought teacher education to the forefront of higher education issues. At the same time that the demand for teachers is increasing, states are also trying to increase the quality of the teaching workforce through higher standards. How can universities and colleges better prepare teachers so that they can excel with a wide range of students and in a world that requires mastery of traditional subjects and technical competency? What kinds of state policies are needed to address both the quality and quantity issues? With high mobility among teachers, how can regional or multistate agreements address questions of teacher certification, licensing, continuing education, compensation, and other concerns?

- **Changing Student Population.** The demographic profile of undergraduates on the nation's campuses shows growing diversity. Older, culturally mixed, part-time students not necessarily seeking an academic

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degree – they are not the wave of the future but the substance of the present. Their expectations and demands on higher education institutions are usually not those of traditional students nor those that institutions are prepared to deal with. Simply gaining access to programs and courses is an initial hurdle for many students. Are changes needed in existing state policies to increase educational opportunity for all students? Can a combination of better K-12 preparation and competency-based higher ed plus broader offerings via distance education cut time-to-degree, free up college and university seats, and thus improve access for all students?

- **Affordability and Financial Aid.** Policymakers at all levels have made it clear that the affordability of higher education must be addressed. Cost, price, and financial aid issues are intertwined in a complex combination of factors that have prompted many to criticize higher education as being beyond the reach of most citizens. Higher education is expected to respond with new strategies to keep college affordable for the middle class and improve affordability for low-income families. How do state policies shape cost and pricing issues? How can states reduce the cost of education without sacrificing quality? The decline of need-based grants cuts access to the poorest students: Can this problem be resolved without sacrificing other aid programs? Can information technology reduce the price and cost of higher education? Are affordability concerns driving students to other providers?

- **Competency-Based Education.** A major shift began in many states during the 1990s as policymakers became interested in competency-based reform in K-12. Coupled with accountability and quality issues in higher education, competency-based approaches began to emerge in admissions and outcomes. With links to accreditation and labor market demands, competencies are becoming part of the framework of higher education in more and more states. What state policies best support a shift to outcomes-based education? Do competency-based outcomes approaches apply equally well to all programs and courses? Do competency-based admissions policies meet state needs and expectations better than past policies?

- **Changing Role of Faculty.** Compensation, workload, training, and reward structures have long been faculty issues within the purview of institutional and system policy. As the role of faculty evolves at the end of the twentieth century, however, state policymakers are increasingly folding these issues into state-level concerns related to accountability, productivity, quality, and access. The growth of information technology has particularly grayed the demarcation between institutional and state policy for faculty. Are faculty issues state policy issues, and if so, which ones – productivity, intellectual property, differential responsibilities and roles, compensation, promotion, quality control? What types of state and federal policies are needed? What will proprietary and corporate providers do to reshape faculty roles? What are the rights of the faculty members' home institutions?

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Western Policy Exchange strategies to facilitate systemic change:

- **Multistate forums** convened policymakers with state and campus leaders; their conversations during and following the forums facilitated change discussions, fostered a coordinated effort to develop specific strategies to advance systemic reforms, and strengthened opportunities for regional solutions to shared problems.

- **State caucus** sessions in each forum encouraged understanding and acceptance of different perspectives and provided a springboard for carrying these discussions back to participants' home states to continue work from the forums.

- **State roundtables** furnished a mechanism to bring together campus, state, corporate, and legislative leaders to discuss change agendas for higher education in the context of education, economic, demographic, and other data.

- **WICHE Commissioners and Legislative Advisory Committee** members guided the project, provided leadership regionally and statewide, strengthened commitment to the project, and promoted change agendas in their states.

- **Publications** – those commissioned for the project and others produced periodically by WICHE – supported discussions during forums, workshops, and roundtables and provided formative and summative evaluations of the project.

Over the last three years, WICHE has sponsored five policy forums and workshops and over a dozen roundtables in states across the West on a wide range of critical higher ed topics, including:

Forums & Workshops

- **Transforming Higher Education: New Structures in Finance, Governance, Delivery and Productivity // San Diego, August 1996**
- **Fostering Postsecondary Student Success: Transitions, Transfer & Articulation //Seattle, May 1997**
- **Endangered Access: Financing & Delivering Higher Education in Growth States with Limited Resources // Huntington Beach, October 1997**
- **Policy in Transition: Information Technology's Impact on the Financing of Higher Education // Portland, December 1998**
- **Financial Aid Workshop // Phoenix, May 1999**

Roundtables

- **Business & Higher Education // Idaho, October 1997 and April 1998**
- **Restructuring Revisited // Montana, October 1997**
- **Shaping a Consensus & Teacher Education // New Mexico, September 1997, November 1997, and September 1998**
- **Funding, Faculty Salaries, and Accountability // South Dakota, June 1997, October 1997, and August 1998**
- **Higher Education & K-12 // Arizona, June 1998 and December 1998**
- **The Changing Academic Marketplace, Technology & Distance Learning and Competency-Based Credentialing // Washington, May 1998 and September 1998**

For more information on the Western Policy Exchange project, contact Cheryl Blanco, director, Policy and Information unit at WICHE (303/541-0221) or email at cblanco@wiche.edu, or visit our Web site at http://www.wiche.edu.

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WICHE Commissioners

ALASKA

Diane M. Barrans
executive director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, Juneau

Johnny Ellis
state senator, Anchorage

Mark Hamilton
president of the University of Alaska Statewide System, Fairbanks

ARIZONA

Frank Besnette
executive director, Arizona Board of Regents, Phoenix

Linda Blessing
incoming executive director, Arizona Board of Regents, Phoenix

Lawrence Gudis
senior regional vice president, University of Phoenix, Phoenix

CALIFORNIA

Judith Chambers
vice president of student life, University of the Pacific, Stockton

To be appointed

COLORADO

Debbie Allen
state representative, Aurora

Joe D. May
president, Pueblo Community College

Anthony J. Rechlitz
lawyer, Aurora

HAWAII

Doris Ching
vice president for student affairs, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu

Gerald L. De Mello
director of university relations, University of Hawaii at Hilo

Raymond S. Ono
senior vice president, University Banking Center, First Hawaiian Bank, Honolulu

IDAHO

Gregory G. Fitch
executive director, State Board of Education, Boise

Jack Riggs
state senator and physician, Coeur d' Alene

Charles Ruch
president, Boise State University

MONTANA

Richard Crofts
commissioner, Montana University System, Helena

Francis J. Kerins
former president of Carroll College, Helena

Emily Swanson
state representative, Bozeman

NEVADA

Richard S. Jarvis
chancellor, University and Community College System of Nevada, Reno

Paul Page
vice president for university advancement, University of Nevada, Reno

Raymond D. Rawson
state senator, Las Vegas

NEW MEXICO

Everett Frost
president, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales

Pauline Gubbels
state representative, Albuquerque

Bruce D. Hamlett
executive director, Commission on Higher Education, Santa Fe

NORTH DAKOTA

Roy Hausauer
former state representative, Wahpeton

Larry Isaak
chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck

Joe Peltier
vice president, North Dakota Board of Higher Education, Arthur

OREGON

Roger J. Bassett
commissioner, Oregon Community Colleges and Job Training Partnership Act Administration, Salem

George E. Richardson, Jr.
manager of federal and local government relations and community affairs, NW Natural, Portland

Diane Vines
vice chancellor for corporate and public affairs and board secretary, Oregon University System

SOUTH DAKOTA

Robert Burns
distinguished professor, Political Science Department, South Dakota State University, Brookings

David R. Gienapp
lawyer and president, South Dakota Board of Regents, Madison

Robert T. (Tad) Perry
executive director, South Dakota Board of Regents, Pierre

UTAH

Cecelia H. Foxley
commissioner of higher education, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City

Lyle Hillyard
state senator, Logan

Dale O. Zabriskie
president, Zabriskie & Associates, and member, State Board of Regents, Salt Lake City

WASHINGTON

Don Carlson
state representative, Vancouver

Marcus S. Gaspard
executive director, Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, Olympia

Ken Jacobsen
state senator, Seattle

WYOMING

Philip L. Dubois
president, University of Wyoming, Laramie

Rae Lynn Job
state senator and director of special projects, Sweetwater School District #1, Rock Springs

Jenne Lee Twiford
principal of Douglas Middle School, Douglas

Legislative Advisory Committee

ALASKA

Sen. Johnny Ellis
Rep. Gene Therriault

ARIZONA

Rep. Dan Schottel
To be appointed

CALIFORNIA

Sen. John Vasconcellos
Assemblymember Jack Scott

COLORADO

Rep. Debbie Allen
Sen. Ken Arnold

HAWAII

Sen. David Ige
Rep. David Mapihara

IDAHO

Sen. Jack Riggs
Rep. Fred Tilman

MONTANA

Rep. Emily Swanson
Sen. Daryl Toews

NEVADA

Sen. Raymond Rawson
Assemblymember Morse Arberry

NEW MEXICO

Rep. Danice Picraux
Sen. Pauline Eisenstadt

NORTH DAKOTA

Sen. David Nething
To be appointed

OREGON

Sen. Tom Hartung
Rep. Ryan Deckert

continued on page 18

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Legislative Advisory Committee

continued

SOUTH DAKOTA
Rep. Mitch Richter
Sen. Barbara Everist

UTAH
Sen. David Steele
Rep. Afton Bradshaw

WASHINGTON
Sen. Albert Bauer
Rep. Don Carlson

WYOMING
Sen. Rae Lynn Job
To be appointed

Several education and policy-related organizations served as cooperating organizations in support of one or more of the Western Policy Exchange's regional policy forums and state roundtables. They include:

- American Council on Education
- Arizona Board of Regents
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
- California Citizens Commission on Higher Education
- Council of State Governments-WEST
- Education Commission of the States
- Idaho State Board of Education
- James Irvine Foundation
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- Mexican American State Legislators Policy Institute
- Montana University System
- National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- New Mexico Commission on Higher Education
- Sallie Mae Education Institute
- South Dakota Board of Regents
- State Higher Education Executive Officers
- Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Western Governors' Association

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